

ADDRESS

OF THE

Oil Producers of Pennsylvania.

To the Citizens of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Greeting:

Your fellow citizens of the State of Pennsylvania, who are engaged in the business of producing petroleum in the western counties, desire to bring to your notice and knowledge, to the end that it may be brought to an issue and be settled once and forever, the subject of freight discriminations on the part of railroads and other common carriers, whereby individuals are injured, the prosperity of the State impaired and enterprise retarded or rendered abortive.

In our case we find such discriminations now made by our only railroad outlets, in favor of a single favored refining organization not even belonging to this State, but having its existence and headquarters in a neighboring State, at present an almost impassable barrier to free trade in our product, by making it practically impossible for

other than this one favored refining organization, to pay the current price for our product, transport it to the various refining and distributing points and live.

A more serious question is the fact that corporations which formerly paid large amounts of taxes to the State, have been forced out of existence, while their property has become the property of this foreign corporation or organization, which is not answerable in its corporate capacity to this State, and the property thereby escapes much taxation to which your citizens are subjected, and thus the treasury of the State itself is depleted; and all this through the discriminating action of the railroads in favor of this very organization.

The effect is and has been, to completely paralyze open trade and makes the one refining organization the only purchaser of our product, with all the disasters and evils attending such monopoly.

Our case is not an isolated one. it is but the most recent; unfortunately for all, the sufferers from such discrimination are to be found in all branches of business, and all parts of the State. But our case is so flagrant and the injustice so glaring, an entire community now find voice and indignantly remonstrate against this arrogant assumption on the part of the railroad corporations in thus shutting us out from the world and forcing us to sell only to the one whom they favor, and we rely upon your aid in effectually putting an end to such an iniquitous system.

Various cities have felt the intolerable incubus of freight discriminations, but none more notably, perhaps, than Pittsburgh, which has had its prosperity seriously impaired, throwing large numbers of workmen into the streets in a state of idleness, and a state of public feeling engendered which spoke only too practically and disastrously in the

terrible riots and destruction of railroad property in July, 1877.

We are, in all parts of the State and country, suffering the effects of long continued business depression, with bankruptcy as the fate of many. While not the only cause, it is believed the impolicy and bad management of our railroads, has not a little to do with it and owing principally to freight discriminations. Business men cannot undertake large enterprises where they are dependent upon treacherous and uncertain rates of freight, for to engage successfully in any business requires equality in freight rates and as little uncertainty in such matters as is possible to attain. The managers of these railroad corporations, which your laws created, practically assume to control the mercantile and commercial affairs of our Commonwealth, divert them as they please, and carry your merchandise and products at rates subject to their own will alone and practically assume to be above the law.

The revised Constitution of our State expressly prohibits rebates on freight rates, yet it is inoperative, for some of these railroads, holding their rights from you, refuse to accept the provisions of our present Constitution, and ignore your will and sovereignty.

The legislative powers are supposed to be lodged in your General Assembly; but in practice, your material interests are regulated and governed by the managers of these railroad corporations, who, by their secret discriminations in freight rates and improper favoritism, assume all the prerogatives of sovereignty over you, and ignore your Assembly and its authority.

By their individual exercise of these usurped powers the railroad corporations actually govern your State, and thus the sovereignty which the people of right possess

through their General Assembly, has been grasped by a few railroad managers. These railroad corporations claim the right to discriminate in favor of a large shipper of a commodity by giving a low rate of freight in consideration of his large shipments over their lines, and to charge a higher rate of freight to a shipper who may not ship as much.

It seems needless to point out the fallacy of these claims. The system positively stops enterprise in such matters, and the small shipper of to-day must remain small and only live by sufferance. Nor is it necessary to point out how inevitably it must corrupt the management of these very railroad corporations, as well as debauch mercantile honor by such systematic deceit in freight rates.

To admit its longer continuance is to consent to the centralization of business and wealth into the hands of the few and the consequent result of reducing the many to a state of poverty and servitude ; for under such an unbusiness like and corrupt system, enterprise and ability is little worth and must end in being suppressed or rendered abortive.

Fellow-citizens, we ask you to consider and ponder this matter : take it home to each of you and then adopt such procedure as shall terminate a system which has been so long an incubus upon the commerce and mercantile affairs of our State, and which has brought bankruptcy and ruin upon the many to the enrichment of the few.

We ask that you instruct your representatives to the General Assembly to see that proper laws are passed as shall make the constitutional provisions upon the subject of discrimination and rebates in freight rates, effective and cause the Constitution of the State to be a rule and a bond in fact ; that these corporations shall be held liable in dam-

ages for infractions, and that the managers of them who shall violate the law and the Constitution by giving such rebates, shall be liable by fine, and imprisonment as well.

We ask that you instruct your representatives to enact a law whereby any person or persons, company or corporation, who shall furnish a full car load of any commodity to any railroad, shall have the same transported at as low a rate of freight as is charged any other person or persons, company or corporation, upon similar commodities and between similar points.

Railroads are common carriers: they have no inherent right or delegated powers to govern the people or their business. This power belongs to you. Will you exercise it or will you longer submit to the exercise of powers and executive authority over you which, never granted by you to any corporation, have been usurped to your and our great detriment?

Will you exert your rightful authority over your servants the common carrier, the railroad corporation made by your laws, or will you longer submit tamely until the entire enterprise and ability of our noble Commonwealth has been still further emasculated and brought to a still greater servitude?

Do not misunderstand us; we mean no war on corporations. They are useful means of achieving valuable ends, but the creature we create must not become the master. Such, however, the railroad corporations have become, owing largely to our own supineness, and to the lack of proper restrictive and supervisory legislation, until through their corrupting influence and misrepresentations, it has heretofore been almost impossible to effect the legislation necessary for the safety of the people at large.

Instruct your representatives in the General Assembly that if proper bills are presented bearing upon the evils referred to, tending to their correction, to vote for them. Note those who shall vote against such bills, and by their votes assist in continuing these evils, and retire such men to the private life they never should have left. Elect no man to hereafter represent you in the General Assembly unless such as shall go pledged to redress the grievances we now suffer from, and shall furthermore agree to assist and aid in passing such laws as shall cause every corporation doing business in the State, to become subject to the Constitution of the State and the laws pursuant thereto.

Our present remedy for the evils we are suffering from and mention above, is in a Free Pipe Law, similar in its general features to the Railroad Law, whereby any one may be permitted to lay pipe lines from the petroleum producing regions to any other part of the State, with the right to condemn the right of way therefor.

We ask no aid, no subsidies, no appropriations from the State ; we ask only the same freedom of action now given to railroads, and which will enable us to communicate with those who want our product.

We ask your aid and influence.

By order of

THE GENERAL COUNCIL

of the Petroleum Producers Protective Union.

TITUSVILLE, PA., January 10, 1878.